

Numbers 17-18 - Thursday, October 7th, 2010

17:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father's house, all their leaders according to their fathers' houses -- twelve rods. Write each man's name on his rod. 3 And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father's house.

- Obviously, God is about to do something in their midst on the heels of all that has just happened as horrific and traumatic as it's been.
- He instructs them to get 12 rods, or branches representing each of the 12 Tribes of Israel, and tells them to put their names on them.
- The reason for this is because the rod is a symbol of authority, and because Aaron's authority was questioned, God is going to settle it.
- In other words, by deputizing and authorizing Aaron once and for all, the Israelites would have the final word from God for the future.

"Rods were the ensigns of government, the scepters of the rulers. To submit the scepter of each tribe to the Lord was a symbolical presentation of all their claims to him. All the rods were alike dead and dry, and it remained with the Lord to choose which he pleased, and quicken it into life and verdure. Owing to the destruction of Korah, the Levites were not divided as to who should be their claimant for office, but unanimous that Aaron should stand for them."

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4 Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you. 5 And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you."

- Now, the Lord makes it abundantly clear as to what He will accomplish in choosing which rod to bless and blossom out of the twelve.
- He is ridding Himself of the complaints of the children of Israel against Moses and Aaron even though He knows they'll still murmur.
- This is interesting for several reasons not the least of which is it exposes complainers for who they are and how they're never satisfied.
- Another reason Aaron's budding rod is so interesting is because it pictures fruitfulness coming from a dead branch which is a miracle.
- Suffice it to say, this also pictures ever so beautifully the person of Jesus Christ Who is ultimately the fulfillment of this typology.

Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. NKJV

6 So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. 7 And Moses placed the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness. 8 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds.

- Notice that not only does it sprout it blossoms, it even yields ripe almonds overnight. You think that God wants to make this clear?

9 Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod. 10 And the LORD said to Moses, "Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die." 11 Thus did Moses; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

- This budding rod of Aaron would end up in the Ark of the Covenant itself as a reminder to the Israelites of their sin, and His mercy.
- In addition to the budding rod, the Ark of the Covenant would also contain the broken tablets of the law, and the manna from heaven.
- The common denominator between all three of these things being in the Ark was that they all represented the children of Israel's sin.
- In other words, the Mercy Seat would cover their breaking God's law, complaining about manna, and rebelling against leadership.

12 So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! 13 Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD must die. Shall we all utterly die?"

- Perhaps now, after all the horrific events of the last couple of days, they are finally realizing the seriousness of their sin and rebellion.
- Be that as it may, this does not mean that they have had a change of heart. It really only means that it's revealed the sin of their heart.

18:1 Then the LORD said to Aaron: "You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.

- Now in chapter 18, we sort of round a corner with Aaron being told by the Lord that he and all his descendants will "bear the iniquity."
- In other words, they will be held responsible and accountable, proportionate to the duty and authority they have been given as priests.

- Also, notice that the Lord speaks directly to Aaron and not through Moses. This is one of only two times that the Lord does this.

2 Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. 3 They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die -- they and you also.

- Here again we see the distinction between Levites and the descendants of Aaron. Only Aaron's descendants served in the Tabernacle.
- In other words, all the Priests were Levites, but not all the Levites were Priests. The Levite's who were not Priests were the assistants.

4 They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you. 5 And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel.

- Here we catch a glimpse of the "why" behind the "what" God is saying. He doesn't want them to disobey and have more wrath on them.

6 Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the LORD, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 7 Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

- Notice that He says the Levites who assist in the work of the Tabernacle are a gift from God to the Priests. How true is this?

- Not only are they a gift from God, but they have been gifted by God to serve in this area. We see this in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. NIV

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way. NIV

8 And the LORD spoke to Aaron: "Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever. 9 This shall be yours of the most holy things reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, shall be most holy for you and your sons. 10 In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.

- Now the Lord is sort of letting Aaron know how much support he and his descendants will have in their service in the Tabernacle.

11 "This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

- The Priests were allowed to take portions from the offerings for themselves and their family as a way of providing for their needs.

12 "All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you. 13 Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. 14 "Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. 15 "Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. 16 And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17 But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. 18 And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours.

- It's interesting the Lord says that it's not the left over's that the Priests get, but the best, and the first is for them and their household.

- This not only applies to the Priests receiving the offerings, it also applies to those giving the offerings. No left over's for, or from God.

19 "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you."

- This "Covenant of Salt" carries with it the idea of both purification and preservation because it stays pure as a chemical compound.

- Also, it is a preserving agent in that it keeps things from getting rotten, which is why God refers to it as a "Covenant of Salt."

"By which was meant that it was an unchangeable, incorruptible covenant, which would endure as salt makes a thing to endure, so that it is not liable to putrefy or corrupt."

Charles Spurgeon

20 Then the LORD said to Aaron: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

- Once again we're given the "why" behind the "what" of the Priest's feeding their families with the offerings that were given to the Lord.

- The Levite's, as the Priestly tribe, were not given an inheritance as the other tribes, because the Lord was their portion and inheritance.

- This meant that they could put their hope and trust in the Lord, Who was bound by this "Covenant of Salt" to always provide for them.

21 "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 22 Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. 23 But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. 24 For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.'"

- God makes it clear that the Levites should be able to live on the tithes and offerings because He is the one Who is giving it to them.

1 Corinthians 9:7-14 7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? 8 Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. NIV

25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 26 "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe. 27 And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. 28 Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest. 29 Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.' 30 Therefore you shall say to them: 'When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress. 31 You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. 32 And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.'"

- Now God is telling them that just because they are provided for from the tithing, doesn't mean that they themselves shouldn't be tithing.

- In other words, the Priests were to tithe too, just as everyone else and were not exempt because they were serving in the Tabernacle.